

New Park is On Schedule
Council President Scott Peters, First District
For the Carmel Valley News, July 2007

One of the recurring issues facing Carmel Valley is that parks are planned for the future in areas where people live today. This can be frustrating for residents who want places for their children to play now. Thanks to the cooperation of City staff, community groups and local developers, we have had much success in accelerating the timeline of several community parks.

Last month, the Torrey Hills Community Planning Board presented me with a petition containing well over 500 signatures from residents concerned about the status of parks in Carmel Valley. A number of letters on this topic have also recently appeared in the *Carmel Valley News*.

Residents are particularly concerned about Carmel Valley Community Park South, a park which will ultimately be a six-acre park with joint-use fields adjacent to East Ocean Air Elementary School. East Ocean Air Elementary School opens this September, and a portion of the neighborhood park is on-track to open in the fall of 2008, as is stated in the Carmel Valley Facilities Financing Plan.

The park's general development plan, including a recreation center design, was approved by the City's Park and Recreation Board on December 16, 2004. The City Council approved a joint-use agreement with the Del Mar Union School District on November 14, 2006. At that time, the staff report projected that the park opening would not coincide with the first day of school, but that the City was committed to opening a portion of the park as close to the school opening as possible.

Carmel Valley Community Park South and the Carmel Valley Skate Facility are my top park priorities for Carmel Valley. Both are well on their way to a timely opening. While I understand that notification was given about the park's later opening date, I have encouraged Mayor Jerry Sanders and his staff to streamline the bid and construction process and prioritize the joint-use fields above all else, so as to minimize the amount of time East Ocean Air students will be without recreation fields.

Another major concern during construction of the park is the issue of student safety and accessibility from the adjacent neighborhoods. It has always been the intent of the Del Mar Union School District to have neighborhood schools; children that live on the same street can walk to school together safely and easily.

A potential walking path has been graded along Nantucket Park Way for children to walk to and from school. I commend the Del Mar Union School District and the Park and Recreation Department for recognizing the importance of a safe and secure walking path for students. Major water and sewer infrastructure work is scheduled for that road this year. I have asked the City to work with the contractor to ensure that walking access is preserved for students.

It is clear that the residents of Torrey Hills and Carmel Valley share my passion for parks. Thank you for your advocacy on behalf of parks and open space. I hope to have more good news to share with you in the future.